

USDA news

USDA's Employee News Publication—For You & About You!

We Honor Our Award-Winning USDA Achievers

by Charlene Baker
RD Human Resources Staff

USDA honored a number of its employees, for their outstanding achievements, at its 57th Annual Honor Awards Ceremony, which took place June 13 at the Ronald Reagan International Trade Center in Washington, DC.

Sandra Anglade, USDA's employee recognition program manager with the Office of Human Resources Management and coordinator of the Ceremony, said that USDA honor awards were awarded to 84 recipients, including 30 individuals and 54 groups.

140 nominations, which included 50 individuals and 90 groups, had been submitted earlier to the USDA Honor Awards Evaluation Committee. That group, chaired by **Chris Alsop**, deputy administrator for community programs in the Rural Housing Service, was composed of Alsop and five individuals selected from academia, from elsewhere in the federal government, and from within USDA. The six-member Committee had reviewed those nominations in April and had then made its recommendations to Secretary **Ann M. Veneman**.

At the ceremony Veneman delivered the keynote address and then presented the major USDA awards to the employees. "The Honor Awards highlight the dedi-

cation and talents of USDA employees who contribute in so many ways to improving the world around us," she said. "These honorees, and all those recognized through this award program, represent just a small fraction of the many creative and hard-working employees at USDA."

Cecilia Matthews, USDA's incentive awards program manager with OHRM, said that the highest USDA honor awards are the Plow Awards. Four individuals and five groups received Plow Awards this year. Those recipients have that particular annotation by their respective names in the lists that follow.

In addition to the 84 USDA honor award presentations, USDA's awards program noted the Secretary's Special Award to the Farm Bill Working Group, the Department's 15 Presidential Rank Award recipients for 2002, the USDA recipients of major awards sponsored by external organizations, and the 621 Departmental employees across the country who have 40 or more years of federal service. Of those, 17 have 50 or more years of federal service. Within that group, and for at least the third year in a row, the USDA employee with the longest years of federal service is reported to be **Harold "Bruno" Mangum**, currently a program specialist with the Farm Service Agency's state office in Raleigh, N.C., who, at press time, has 67 years of federal service—and all of it is with USDA.

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"The document on my computer confirms my observations about the anti-oxidant properties in this orange tomato," notes **Penny Perkins-Veazie**, a plant physiologist with ARS's South Central Agricultural Lab in Lane, Okla. She is sitting at her computer, located at her home in Durant, Okla. That's because she is one of over 2,000 USDA employees participating in USDA's Telework Program. She "teleworks," working at her ARS job from her residence instead of from her office at the lab, one day per week. There are some recent developments in USDA's Telework Program. Note the story below.—PHOTO BY RAY VEAZIE

"Telework" Gets An Added Look At USDA There's A Message On The Button

by Ron Hall
Office of Communications

USDA's "Telework Program" has been shining the spotlight on three recent developments, and **Marge Adams** wants you to know about it.

Adams, manager of USDA's work & life program in the Office of Human Resources Management, explained that, as background, the Department's Telework Program is the initiative in which a USDA employee performs his/her job at an "alternate work site," whether at a telework center, a satellite office, or at his/her own residence. This is instead of commuting to one's normal USDA duty station. An employee generally "teleworks" or "telecommutes" during a pre-

designated number of days of the week, with supervisory permission.

USDA employees have been participating in the Department's Telework Program since 1990.

Jim Stevens, director of OHRM's Safety, Health and Employee Welfare Division, said the program has since expanded to include use of telework centers and satellite offices, both of which are bonafide, fully equipped offices generally located some distance away from the main office but closer to the employee's residence. The employee commutes to that site instead of to the main office—and it generally always makes for an easier and shorter commute to "the job."

Recently, three new or enhanced features are now seen as part of this "flexiplace" concept.

First, last year the Office of Personnel Management required all federal departments to designate a senior executive to be the telework

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Ann M. Veneman *Secretary of Agriculture*

Americans are so accustomed to the bounty of safe, affordable food that it is difficult to understand the fact that more than 800 million of the world's people—nearly one in seven—face chronic hunger. Among children, one in three is undernourished, and every five seconds a child is lost to hunger.

The good news, however, is that finding solutions to global hunger and malnutrition is gaining momentum around the world. Leaders from both developing and developed countries are coming together to put new life in the global goal of cutting hunger by half by 2015.

The United States is leading the way to help developing countries increase their agricultural productivity and thus reduce hunger and poverty. And the work of USDA employees is an important part of our efforts. Employees in almost every corner of USDA touch the lives of many around the world. From conducting needed research, to implementing domestic and international food aid programs, to providing U.S. technical help to developing countries, USDA plays a critical role.

But no event was more illustrative of our efforts than the Ministerial Conference and Expo on Agricultural Science and Technology held in June in Sacramento, Calif. This was the first time that USDA has hosted such an important conference, where more than 400 delegates from 117 countries came together to discuss the technologies that are available to help developing countries increase their productivity. The event was a massive undertaking.

The Foreign Agriculture Service led the effort with the help of many USDA agencies. Thousands of hours were spent on the numerous planning and implementation details. For instance, a remarkable program featured experts in a variety of disciplines who were recruited to participate in educational breakout sessions and on the ground tours of facilities around the Conference area. A report—"21st Century Agriculture: A Critical Role for Science and Technology"—was published and an exposition that showcased available technologies was organized. Employees also worked hard in arranging for unprecedented security measures.

The information provided by the speakers, which can be found on www.usda.gov, helped to put the issue of global hunger and poverty into perspective. As I reminded the delegates, behind our efforts is a very real human face. That human face motivates all of our efforts at USDA as we promote technology's role in helping feed and nourish people around the globe.

That reality was the moral imperative that drove the Sacramento conference. The conference generated a great deal of enthusiasm among those attending, but even better, it has yielded the prospect of follow-up efforts such as regional conferences and meetings that will focus on individual staple foods. It has helped refocus the international community on reducing hunger and increasing economic development in areas where the need is greatest. That continuing enthusiasm is an important result of our efforts to help those in need around the world and is something that we can all be proud of. ■

"Telework" ...continued from pg. 1

representative—or "executive champion for telework"—within each department, responsible for the implementation of a telework policy for that department. In September 2002 **Clyde Thompson**, associate assistant secretary for administration, was designated as the "executive champion for telework" for USDA.

"But then we decided that, at USDA, it would enhance the program if we had an 'executive champion for telework' for each mission area or staff office, in addition to one person for the entire Department," Adams said. So by December 2002, 15 additional senior executives had been designated as the "executive champions for telework" within their respective areas.

Second, USDA's Telework Program is being spotlighted as a way that employees with either temporary or permanent disabilities can work as productive employees at USDA. **Bill Haig**, USDA's disability employment program manager in OHRM, noted this is not really a new development.

However, a renewed emphasis on this particular aspect of teleworking included the fact that the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission recently prepared a document containing a list of frequently asked questions on how to use teleworking as a "reasonable accommodation" for workers with temporary or permanent disabilities. Adams, in turn, disseminated that document in March 2003 to USDA's agency-level telework

coordinators and resource managers, plus to USDA employee organizations, noting this is "Great for marketing Telework and Reasonable Accommodations."

In addition, in August 2002 USDA entered into an interagency agreement with the Department of Defense's Computer/Electronic Accommodations Program (CAP) so that "assistive technology" may be provided—at no cost to USDA agencies—for use by USDA employees with disabilities. "Assistive technology," explained **Bruce McFarlane**, director of USDA's Washington, DC-based TARGET Center, "includes products, devices, and equipment that are used to maintain, increase, or improve the functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities."

He said that, to date, his office has processed 114 CAP requests in FY 2003. "This is saving USDA over \$126,000 in 'reasonable accommodation' costs. Some of those requests are being used to accommodate a USDA employee working out of his/her residence or at a telework site."

Third, in January 2002 USDA's Telework Program implemented a pilot project whereby a civil service employee of the Foreign Agricultural Service, who is a spouse of an FAS foreign service officer who has been transferred overseas, is eligible to telework in his/her FAS position from that overseas location.

According to **Susan Brown**, the telework program coordinator for the Farm and Foreign

Agricultural Services mission area, at present one person is participating in this program from her mission area. "**Darlene Maginnis**, an agricultural marketing specialist with FAS who used to be based at FAS headquarters in Washington, DC, is continuing in that position full-time, even though she now resides with her foreign service officer spouse in Ottawa, Canada," Brown said.

OHRM work & life program specialist **Constance Smith** noted that USDA's most recent official guidance on teleworking is contained in Departmental Regulation 4080-811-02, dated September 1, 2002. "But participation in a telework arrangement is *not* an employee entitlement," Adams advised. "In addition, many USDA jobs are *not* suitable for offsite work. Plus, it's always subject to a supervisor's approval."

Adams said over 40,000 USDA employees are eligible to telework. "Of that number, USDA management has authorized over 23,000 to do so—and over 2,000 are, in fact, currently teleworking." 935—or nearly half of that number—telework at USDA field sites around the country, while the rest telework within the Washington, DC metropolitan area. Eighteen employees with disabilities and 87 employees on temporary medical disability have received "reasonable accommodations" through telework.

"I have a button that reads 'Work Is What, Not Where, You Do It,'" Adams noted. "I think that message is right on target." ■

Notes *from USDA Headquarters*

No less than 28 USDA agencies and the U.S. Agency for International Development focused the remaining days of June on making USDA's first-ever Ministerial Conference and Expo on Agricultural Science and Technology a rousing success. Called for by Secretary **Ann M. Veneman** to address the problems of global hunger and poverty, the conference was held in Sacramento June 23-25, drawing hundreds of foreign visitors and media. Earlier that month, she celebrated the 57th Annual Secretary's Honor Awards Ceremony (see page 1).

July saw the sixth class of Hispanic-Serving Institution Fellows announced and the approval of numerous rural development loans and grants to improve the infrastructure of rural America. Under Secretary for Food Safety **Elsa Murano** released a food safety vision document that lays out a strategy to improve the safety of U.S. meat, poultry, and egg products while protecting public health. The Natural Resources Conservation Service released the first annual National Resources Inventory—a document that provides national level estimates on the status and trends for soil erosion, land use, and urbanization and development. And Secretary Veneman paid tribute to the 10,000 summer interns working for USDA.

Ministerial Conference And Expo On Agricultural Science And Technology:

As Secretary Veneman explains in this month's "Secretary's Column," the Sacramento conference was an international invitation to countries whose citizens suffer from hunger and poverty to form partnerships to share the opportunities and benefits of modern technologies in agriculture. Among the 90 speakers who spoke to the more than 400 delegates was Nobel Peace Laureate **Norman Borlaug**. His



"As men and women have done throughout history, we must harness the power of technology using it wisely for the good of all..." Secretary **Ann M. Veneman** speaking at USDA's first-ever Ministerial Conference and Expo on Agricultural Science and Technology, held in Sacramento in June.—
PHOTO BY SCOTT BAUER

leading research achievement was to hasten the perfection of dwarf spring wheat, thus ending food shortages in India and Pakistan. He received the Nobel Peace Prize for his work in 1970.

Representatives from the following agencies and offices met for nearly one year in order to make this meeting a showcase of agricultural research and technology: The Farm Service Agency, the Foreign Agricultural Service, the Risk Management Agency, the Food Safety and Inspection Service, the Forest Service, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Rural Development, the Food and Nutrition Service, the Agricultural Marketing Service, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, the Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration, the Agricultural Research Service, the National Agricultural Library, the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, the Economic Research Service, Departmental Administration, the Office of Procurement and Property Management, the USDA Graduate School, the Office of the Chief Information Officer, the Office of Communications, the Office of Budget and Program Analysis, the Office of the Chief Economist, the Office of the General Counsel, the Office of Inspector General, the Office of the Secretary, the Office of Homeland Security, the Office of Ethics, and

the Office of the Executive Secretariat. For more information go to www.usda.gov

HIS Fellows: Fifteen fellows—actually, faculty members at Hispanic-Serving Institutions in California, Colorado, Illinois, New Mexico, Texas, and Puerto Rico—are working at USDA headquarters for two to six weeks this summer. "The Fellows Program builds on President **George W. Bush's** White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans. It enhances our ability to provide resources and career opportunities for Hispanic educators to participate in federal education programs that serve to improve the educational achievement of Hispanic students," Secretary Veneman said. In 2002 USDA invested more than \$34 million in educational programs targeting Hispanic students and institutions.

Rural Development: In separate actions, Rural Development awarded \$21 million to 18 states to foster business and community development in rural areas through its Intermediary Re-lending Loan Program; gave \$327 million to improve electric services in six states; provided more than \$19 million to fund 10 projects in Florida that will improve local water systems, build a farm labor housing complex and a community facility; and gave \$14.9 million, the first ever High-Energy Cost Program grants, to 7 states to improve energy delivery.

"Enhancing Public Health: Strategies for the Future:"

This FSIS vision document outlines accomplishments to date as well as challenges that must be overcome in order to further reduce the incidence of foodborne illnesses. Under Secretary for Food Safety **Elsa Murano** said public input into the document will be important as

FSIS works to implement several key initiatives to enhance meat and poultry safety and improve food inspection systems. The complete document can be found at www.fsis.usda.gov/oa/programs/vision071003.htm

First Annual National Resources Inventory:

The release of the 2001 National Resources Inventory (NRI) marks the transition from a five-year to an annual survey that estimates the national status and trends for soil erosion, land use, and urbanization and development. A major tool for policy makers, results show conservation efforts have reduced soil erosion by nearly 50 percent between 1982 and 2001. For a full copy of the report go to www.nrcs.usda.gov/news

Mourning Loss Of Fire-fighters:

Forest Service fire-fighters **Jeff Allen** and **Shane W. Heath**, who lost their lives fighting a fire on the Salmon-Challis National Forest in Idaho, were praised by Secretary Veneman who said, "This country owes a debt of gratitude and much respect to these brave firefighters who gave their own lives to protect their fellow citizens, communities, and natural resources." She ordered USDA's flags to fly at half-mast in their honor.

Honoring USDA Interns:

Secretary Veneman honored USDA's summer interns at a ceremony in the Jamie Whitten Building in Washington, DC, calling them "the future of this agency." Veneman noted that nationwide USDA employed about 10,000 interns this summer, "a figure that is double what we had just three years ago." A full transcript of her remarks and those of the interns can be found at www.usda.gov

—**PATRICIA KLINTBERG**

Award-Winning...continued from pg. 1

The 30 Individuals receiving USDA honor Awards included:

For Expanding Economic and Trade Opportunities for United States Agricultural Producers: **Katherine O'Rourke** [Plow Award] (Agricultural Research Service), Pullman Wash.; **Willard Dickerson** (National Association of State Departments of Agriculture), Raleigh, N.C.; **Diane Sharp** (Farm Service Agency), Washington, DC; **Larry Sivers** (National Agricultural Statistics Service), Washington, DC; and **Henry Spelter** (Forest Service), Madison, Wis.; *For Promoting Health by Providing Access to Safe, Affordable, and Nutritious*

Food: **Brian Federici** (Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service and the University of California), Riverside, Calif.; *For Maintaining and Enhancing the Nation's Natural Resources and Environment:* **Thomas Jackson** [Plow Award] (ARS), Beltsville, Md.; **Daniel Kaffer** [Plow Award] (Natural Resources Conservation Service), Carson City, Nev.; **Leroy Brown** (NRCS), Des Moines, Iowa, **Richard Crane** (NRCS), Houghton, Mich.; **Clifford Dils** (FS), Tijeras, N.M.; and **Ronald Neilson** (FS), Corvallis, Ore.; *For Enhancing the Capacity of All Rural Residents, Communities, and Businesses to Prosper:* **Reggie Skains** [Plow

Award] (National Association of Resource Conservation and Development Councils and NRCS), Downsville, La.; **Mark Barnhart** (Office of Inspector General), Columbus, Ohio; **Calvin Beale** (Economic Research Service), Washington, DC; **Rueben Flores** (FSA), Honolulu, Hawaii; **William Hagy** (Rural Business-Cooperative Service), Washington, DC; **James Maetzold** (NRCS), Washington, DC; **Richard Moore** (Risk Management Agency), Topeka, Kan.; **Lynn Pike** (CSREES and the University of Missouri), Columbia, Mo.; and **Eugene Watson** (FS), Ogden, Utah; *For Operating an Efficient, Effective, and Discrimination-Free Organization:*

Michael Bosak (Rural Housing Service), Syracuse, N.Y.; **Mary Ann Jarvis** (ARS), Washington, DC; **Debra Kenerson** (NASS), Nashville Tenn.; **Asa Manning** (NASS), Washington, DC; **Rita Medina** (RHS), Davis Calif.; **Jerry Robinson** (FSA), Idabel, Okla.; **Kalven Trice** (NRCS), Little Rock, Ark.; and **Mary Winters** (FSA), Kansas City, Mo.; *For Heroism and Emergency Response:* **Marilyn Lambert** (FS), Bartow, W.Va.

The 54 Groups—which include over 950 Group members—receiving USDA honor awards included:

For Expanding Economic and Trade Opportunities for United States Agricultural Producers: the

Individual Honor Award Winners



D. SHARP



L. SIVERS



H. SPELTER



B. FEDERICI



T. JACKSON



D. KAFFER



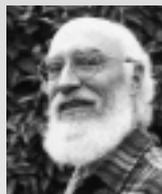
L. BROWN



R. CRANE



C. DILS



R. NEILSON



R. SKAINS



M. BARNHART



C. BEALE



R. FLORES



W. HAGY



J. MAETZOLD



R. MOORE



L. PIKE



E. WATSON



M. BOSAK



M.A. JARVIS



D. KENERSON



A. MANNING



R. MEDINA



J. ROBINSON



K. TRICE



M. WINTERS



M. LAMBERT

Audit Verification Program for Good Agricultural and Good Handling Practices Developmental Team (Agricultural Marketing Service), Washington, DC, **Leanne Skelton**, Group Leader; the Doha Development Team (Foreign Agricultural Service), Washington, DC, **Mary Chambliss**, Group Leader; the Embassy San Jose Team (FAS), San Jose, Costa Rica, **Alan Hrapsky**, Group Leader; the False Phytosanitary Certificate Task Force (Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service), Salem, Mo., **Daniel Hutchings**, Group Leader; the Farm Bill Analysis Team (ERS), Washington, DC, **C. Edwin Young**, Group Leader; the Farm Bill Preparation Team (FSA), Washington, DC, **Diane Sharp**, Group Leader; the Global Food Security Team (ERS), Washington, DC, **Shahla Shapouri**, Group Leader; the Margin of Preference Group (FAS), Washington, DC, **James Grueff**, Group Leader; the Meat and Poultry Inspection Seminar Team (Food Safety and Inspection Service), Washington, DC, **Cheryl Davis**, Group Leader; the Russian Poultry Markets Team (FAS), Washington, DC, **Robert Macke**, Group Leader; and the Water Management Research Laboratory (ARS), Parlier, Calif., **Thomas Trout**, Group Leader; *For Promoting Health by Providing Access to Safe, Affordable, and Nutritious Food*: the Global Food for Education Initiative [Plow Award] (FAS), Washington, DC, **Mary Chambliss**, Group Leader; the Audit Enforcement Strategy Team (FSIS), Washington, DC, **Sally Stratmoen**, Group Leader; the Eat Smart.Play Hard.Campaign Team (Food and Nutrition Service), Alexandria, Va., **Judy Wilson**, Group Leader; the Farm Bill Team (FNS), Alexandria, Va., **Bonny O'Neil**, Group Leader; the Fit WIC Team (FNS), Alexandria, Va., **Jay Hirschman**, Group Leader; the Food Safety Systems Correlation Team (FSIS), Omaha, Neb., **Donald Smart**, Group Leader; the Master Hoof Care Technician Program Team (CSREES and the University of Florida), Gainesville, Fla., **Jan**

Shearer, Group Leader; the Meat and Poultry Import Inspection Improvement Team (FSIS), Washington, DC, **Mary Stanley**, Group Leader; the Northeast Multistate Research Group Northeastern 179 (CSREES and the University of Massachusetts), Amherst, Mass., **Steve Goodwin**, Group Leader; the Nutrient Data Laboratory (ARS), Beltsville, Md., **Joanne Holden**, Group Leader; and the Special Projects Team—Frankfurter Study (ARS), Wyndmoor, Pa., **John Luchansky**, Group Leader; *For Maintaining and Enhancing the Nation's Natural Resources and Environment*: the Biotechnology Regulatory Response and Enforcement Team (APHIS), Riverdale, Md., **Margaret Jones**, Group Leader; the Cooperative Glassy-winged Sharpshooter Areawide Management Team (APHIS), Riverdale, Md., **Lloyd Wendel**, Group Leader; the Greater Parks Fuels Reduction Project (FS), Williams, Ariz., **Susan Skalski**, Group Leader; the Jalisco Pilot Study and Learning Center (FS), Fort Collins, Colo., **Celedonio Aguirre-Bravo**, Group Leader; the Nutrient and Pest Management Training Development Team (NRCS), Colchester, Vt., **James Wood**, Group Leader; the Partnership for Environmental Potato Production (CSREES and the University of Wisconsin), Madison, Wis., **Jeffrey Wyman**, Group Leader; and the Phosphorus Indexing Research Group (ARS), University Park, Pa., **Andrew Sharpley**, Group Leader; *For Enhancing the Capacity of All Rural Residents, Communities, and Businesses to Prosper*: the Pay.Gov Development Team [Plow Award] (RHS), St. Louis, Mo., **Brian Barton**, Group Leader; the Area Office Eight (RHS), Kinston, N.C., **Edwin Causey**, Group Leader; Fishing for Success (CSREES and the University of Florida), Gainesville, Fla., **Daniel Canfield** and **Charles Cichra**, Group Leaders; the Georgia Rural Development Single Family Housing Partnership Group (RHS), Athens, Ga., **Joseph Walden**, Group Leader;

the Healthful Foods Research Team (ARS), Albany, Calif., **Tara McHugh**, Group Leader; the Kauai Loan Project Team (Rural Utilities Service), Washington, DC, **Sally Price**, Group Leader; and the Technology Marketing Unit (FS), Madison, Wis., **Susan LeVan-Green**, Group Leader; *For Operating an Efficient, Effective, and Discrimination-Free Organization*: the Human Capital Management Team [Plow Award] (NRCS), Washington, DC, **Karen Karlinchak**, Group Leader; the Office of the Chief Financial Officer Management Team [Plow Award] (Office of the Secretary), Washington, DC, **Edward "Ted" McPherson**, Group Leader; Chronic Wasting Disease Management (APHIS), Washington, DC, **Ron DeHaven**, Group Leader; CYFERnet (CSREES), Washington, DC, **Sharon Wright**, Group Leader; Field Automation and Information Management (FSIS), Washington, DC, **Peter Kuhmerker**, Group Leader; Field Service Laboratories (FSIS), Athens, Ga., **Patrick McCaskey**, Group Leader; the Massachusetts Rural Development Staff (RHS), Amherst, Mass., **Richard Burke**, Group Leader; the Mid-South Area Workforce Diversity Committee (ARS), Stoneville, Miss., **Edgar King**, Group Leader; the Program Integrity Team Leaders (RMA), Washington, DC, **Larry Piatz**, Group Leader; the USDA Human Capital Team (Office of Human Resources Management), Washington, DC, **Joe Colantuoni**, Group Leader; and the Washington Telecommunications Services and Operations Branch (Office of the Chief Information Officer), Washington, DC, **Vernell Archer**, Group Leader; *For Heroism and Emergency Response*: the Cindi Talkington Rescue Team [Plow Award] (FS), Marienville, Pa., **Christopher Thornton**, Group Leader; the 2002 Salt Lake City Winter Olympics Investigations Group (OIG), Lakewood, Colo., **John Horrigan**, Group Leader; the Core Team to Assess Homeland Security Issues in the Forest

Service (OIG), San Francisco, Calif., **Sam Currie**, Group Leader; the Extension Disaster Education Network (CSREES and the University of Missouri), Columbia, Mo., **David Baker**, Group Leader; the Infectious Salmon Anemia Leadership Team (APHIS), Sutton, Mass., **William Smith**, Group Leader; the Iowa Food Product Tampering Investigations Group (OIG), Des Moines, Iowa, **Craig Hangsleben**, Group Leader; and the Virginia Avian Influenza Task Force Leadership Team (APHIS), Raleigh, N.C., **Thomas Holt**, Group Leader. ■

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<http://www.usda.gov/news/pubs/newslett/cover.htm>

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Editor's Roundup *USDA's people in the news*



Carol House is the associate administrator of the National Agricultural Statistics Service.

From October 1999 until her selection to this position House served as director of NASS's Research and Development Division. She was director of its [then] Survey Management Division from 1996-99. She began her 27-year full-time career with NASS in 1976 as a mathematical statistician at the agency's headquarters office in Washington, DC.

Rich Allen, the previous associate administrator for NASS, is now its deputy administrator for programs and products and chair of NASS's Agricultural Statistics Board. ■



Denny Bschor is the regional forester of the Forest Service's Alaska Region, headquartered in Juneau.

From December 1998 until his selection to this position Bschor served as director of FS's Recreation, Heritage, and Wilderness Resources Staff at its headquarters office in

Washington, DC. He was forest supervisor of the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest, based in Mountlake Terrace, Wash., from 1994-98. From 1985-94 he worked in FS's Rocky Mountain Regional Office in Lakewood, Colo., serving in such positions for the region as director of public affairs and acting director of recreation and public service. He began his career with the Forest Service in 1969 as a forester with the Saguache Ranger District on the Rio Grande National Forest in southern Colorado.

Rick Cables, the previous regional forester of FS's Alaska Region, is now the regional forester of FS's Rocky Mountain Region. ■



"No, I'm not wearing my crown around the house—but, hey, maybe I should!" quipped **Beverly Thornton**.

Thornton, a participant service representative with the Thrift Savings Plan Division at the Office of the Chief Financial Officer's National Finance Center in New Orleans, was referring to the crown she wore as she reigned over the "Krewe of Zulu" Mardi Gras parade on Mardi Gras Parade Day earlier this year. She served as "Queen Zulu" during

PROFILE PLUS *More About: Hilda Gay Legg*



The administrator of the agency charged with providing electricity, telecommunications, and sewer systems to rural America grew up on a 100-acre farm in Knifley, Ky., population 900. **Hilda Gay Legg**, administrator of the Rural Utilities Service, knows firsthand what a difference her agency can make to rural communities. She was 10 years old

before indoor plumbing came to her home farm.

Both her parents worked off the farm but also raised cattle and a few hogs, grew timber and, at one time, tobacco. "Two character building events occurred for me: when my father gave up our tobacco quota and when he got his GED at about age 50," Legg said.

A tobacco quota gives the producer the right to grow the highly valuable cash crop. Otherwise, it can't be marketed. Legg explains, "My father converted to the local Methodist church as a young man. Even though Methodists were considered liberal compared to, say, the Southern Baptists, since they believed tobacco and alcohol consumption was wrong, he gave up our quota. My father believed if you weren't supposed to use it, you weren't supposed to raise it for others to use." Legg's father, now 88, still works the farm with her brother.

A beneficiary of long supper-table discussions, Legg learned about government and taxes at her father's knee. But only when she began studies in sociology at Campbellsville College did she begin to understand the connection between rural poverty and the need to access tools that can begin to reverse it. Before she landed the first job that led to her expertise in this area—as Co-Chairman of the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) in 1990—she had been a secondary school teacher, a member of the faculty at Lindsey Wilson College in Columbia, Ky., worked as a field representative for U.S. Sen. **Mitch McConnell** (R-Ky.) in Bowling Green, and earned an M.A. degree at Western Kentucky University.

But it was working in Sen. McConnell's office that provided the background necessary for the jobs ahead. "During my time there, I became much more familiar with water programs, grant applications, county elected officials, mayors, and people who needed help from the federal government. That's where I really began to learn that whole economic

development piece, so when the ARC came along I was ready," she said.

Legg came to RUS (the Jan.-March 2002 issue of the *USDA News* carried her complete biographical sketch, following her swearing-in to that position) from The Center for Rural Development in Somerset, Ky., following the job at ARC. She served as The Center's CEO for seven years and built its reputation as a national model for economic development in rural areas. "I have been so fortunate between ARC, The Center, and here. I love my staff and I love and believe in what I do. You have to have water; you have to have electricity to turn on those computers; you have to have connectivity to take rural communities into the information age. What we do is just a basic part of helping rural communities help themselves."

RUS provides capital for utility infrastructure to borrowers serving small communities unable to tap into local banks for big-ticket items like scrubbers for a coal-fired plant, DSL lines, or wastewater treatment plants. "What RUS provides is cost of money loans, at very desirable interest rates. The loan and grant programs help to build out electric distribution lines, electric generation and transmission facilities, high-speed telecommunication connectivity, and water and wastewater treatment facilities. We are contributing to the local economic base, which in turn helps pay property taxes and payroll taxes and contributes to the total economy of those rural communities."

Last Book Read: "*Leadership*," by **Rudolph W. Giuliani** and **Ken Kurson**

Hobbies: "It used to be gardening, antiques or 'junk-tiquing'—but now my only other life outside my work is my son **Dane** (age 2)."

Favorite Food: "I like everything except pickled herring and anchovies."

Last Movie Seen: "*Frida*"

Favorite Weekend Breakfast: Ham and biscuits, red eye gravy, two eggs, sliced tomatoes in summer, occasionally grits.

Priorities In The Months Ahead: "To put the final touches on our strategic plan and to begin a policy analysis process to make sure that RUS is looking down the road of the 21st Century. We need to start analyzing what's happening in the industry that eventually will impact our borrowers and the government's loan portfolio."

—**PATRICIA KLINTBERG**

USDA Spotlights Its "Unsung Heroes"

by Ron Hall
Office of Communications

USDA recognized six individual employees as "Unsung Heroes" during its recent observance of Public Service Recognition Week.

According to **Otis Thompson**, executive director of the Organization of Professional Employees, U.S. Department of Agriculture (OPEDA) and retired USDA public affairs specialist, the purpose of the "Unsung Hero" designation is to identify those employees who have been "unusually dedicated and efficient and had a positive attitude."

He noted that nominees as "Unsung Heroes" are based on actual "hands-on" activities rather than on supervisory or managerial efforts. "However," he added, "all USDA employees were eligible to be nominated."

The idea for an "Unsung Heroes" contest was developed in 1987 by a group of six representatives of professional organizations in the Department. In addition to OPEDA, current sponsoring groups include the Association of Technical & Supervisory Professionals, USDA's Employee Services & Recreation Association, the National Association of Federal Veterinarians, and the USDA Chapter of the Senior Executive Association.

This is the 16th year of the

contest, which was conducted USDA-wide. Thompson said that following a Departmentwide solicitation, 40 employees were nominated, either by fellow USDA employees or by customers of USDA programs and services. The final selection was made in April by a team of USDA officials.

runs APHIS's Wisconsin Wildlife Services "Nuisance Wildlife Hotline," a toll-free number that citizens of northern Wisconsin can call for advice on how to resolve conflicts with resident wildlife, such as skunks in garages and bears in backyards. Often callers express frustration, anger, or fear

conservation technicians in central Oklahoma. He has also provided NRCS expertise, for the last three years, as a guest speaker and hands-on soils demonstrator to undergraduate students in a soils class at a local community college.

⑤ **Sandie Stasiak**, an administrative support specialist with the Office of Communications in Washington, DC, who has consistently helped to provide quality customer service to members of the public who contact USDA at its headquarters office. Her efforts include ensuring that she and/or other OC staffers respond to customer phone calls in a timely manner. In addition, for the past 10 years she has managed OC's response to correspondence addressed to USDA's secretary, on a variety of agricultural issues and inquiries, and has done so with painstaking research, an attention to detail, and excellent organizational skills.

⑥ **Dave Steube**, a civil engineering technician with NRCS in Burley, Idaho, who planned, designed, and coordinated the planting of 2.5 miles of pine and juniper trees, plus shrubs, to serve as a "living snow fence" along a particularly dangerous stretch of highway in southeastern Idaho. He also interacted with the affected property owners, convincing them of the value of those plantings on their property. As a result, the snow fence is not only helping to reduce wind erosion but also reducing blowing dust and snow which had caused numerous auto fatalities at that location. ■

USDA's "Unsung Heroes" for 2003 include:

① **Brenda Halbrook**, the food safety coordinator with the Food and Nutrition Service in Alexandria, Va., who activated and then coordinated USDA's "Commodity Food Hold and Recall" procedures on three different food items simultaneously that were destined for school children and and/or food bank recipients located in over half of the states in the country. Those food items had been declared a potential food safety risk. Typically the Department averages only one commodity food recall every few years.

② **Anita Nelson**, a biological science technician with the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service in Rhinelander, Wis., who

about their interaction with resident wildlife. But Nelson typically handles an estimated 2,500 annual calls with a positive, courteous, and friendly manner.

③ **Jim Oftedal**, director of the Forest Service's Central California Consortium based in Clovis, Calif., who has volunteered over 1,000 hours over the past three years as a mentor, speaker to students and parents, a chaperone, and a host to students for job shadowing and mock interviews, as he works to instill confidence and leadership qualities to youth in California's San Joaquin Valley.

④ **Nick Owen**, a soil conservation technician with the Natural Resources Conservation Service in El Reno, Okla., who has used his training talents to train new soil

the festivities—and retains her crown until just before next year's Mardi Gras activities begin.

Thornton explained that the Zulu organization has been holding its own parade during Mardi Gras since 1909. More formally known as the Zulu Social Aid and Pleasure Club, it is a non-profit all-male organization which works in the community, engaged in such activities as assisting local schools, senior citizens homes, and homeless shelters.

Her road to being selected as Queen Zulu for the 2003 Mardi

Gras festivities began over a year ago when she was chosen by her husband **Gary Thornton**, who served as chief of personnel at NFC until he retired in 2000—and who was "King Zulu" for this year's Mardi Gras.

Judy Powers, director of NFC's Thrift Savings Plan Division, noted that the parade over which Thornton reigned consisted of an estimated 75 floats plus over 35 college and high school bands.

So, how did Thornton prepare for 'parade day'? "Actually, you have virtually no control over it at all," she

laughed. "I was surrounded by 'handlers' who applied my makeup, did my hair, and adjusted my crown. Then I became the product that emerged from all that effort."

And as her 'Queen's Float' traversed the ten-mile parade route during the four-hour parade, did she wave to the crowds using the classic British 'royal wave'?

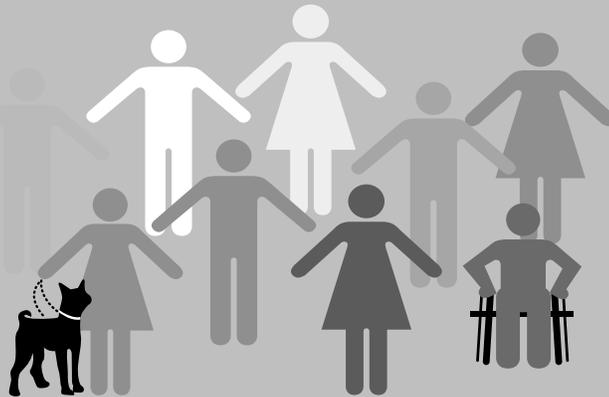
"Oh yes, because, you see, that particular wave also applies to all 'Zulu queens' in New Orleans."

And did she see any fellow USDA employees lining the streets?

"Yes—and especially since members of the crowd are encouraged to hold up a placard with their name on it or, in this case, with 'USDA' on it," Thornton explained. "Many of my fellow employees did that—and this helped me to recognize them, among the thousands of spectators along the parade route."

And how did she respond?

"Well, I wouldn't call out their names—because that wouldn't be queen-like," she laughed. "But I did give them a 'nod of approval' with my scepter." ■





"I rely on two computer screens here at home, just like at my desk at the lab, because it's more efficient to watch for computer viruses on one screen and do ARS web work on the other," affirms **Roy Gammon**, a computer assistant with the Agricultural Research Service's South Central Agricultural Research Laboratory in Lane, Okla. He is at his 'telework site'—his residence in Atoka, Okla.—where twice a week he works on his ARS assignments as he participates in USDA's Telework Program. Recent developments in the Department's Telework Program are spotlighted in the story on page 1.—**PHOTO BY DEANNA GAMMON**



**HELP US FIND
Steven Kegley**

Missing: **10-11-2002** From: **Louisville, KY**
D.O.B. **6-13-1986** Sex: **Male**
Hair: **Brown** Eyes: **Brown**
Height: **5 ft.10 in.** Weight: **225 lbs.**

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